

CONAN THE
BARBARIAN

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

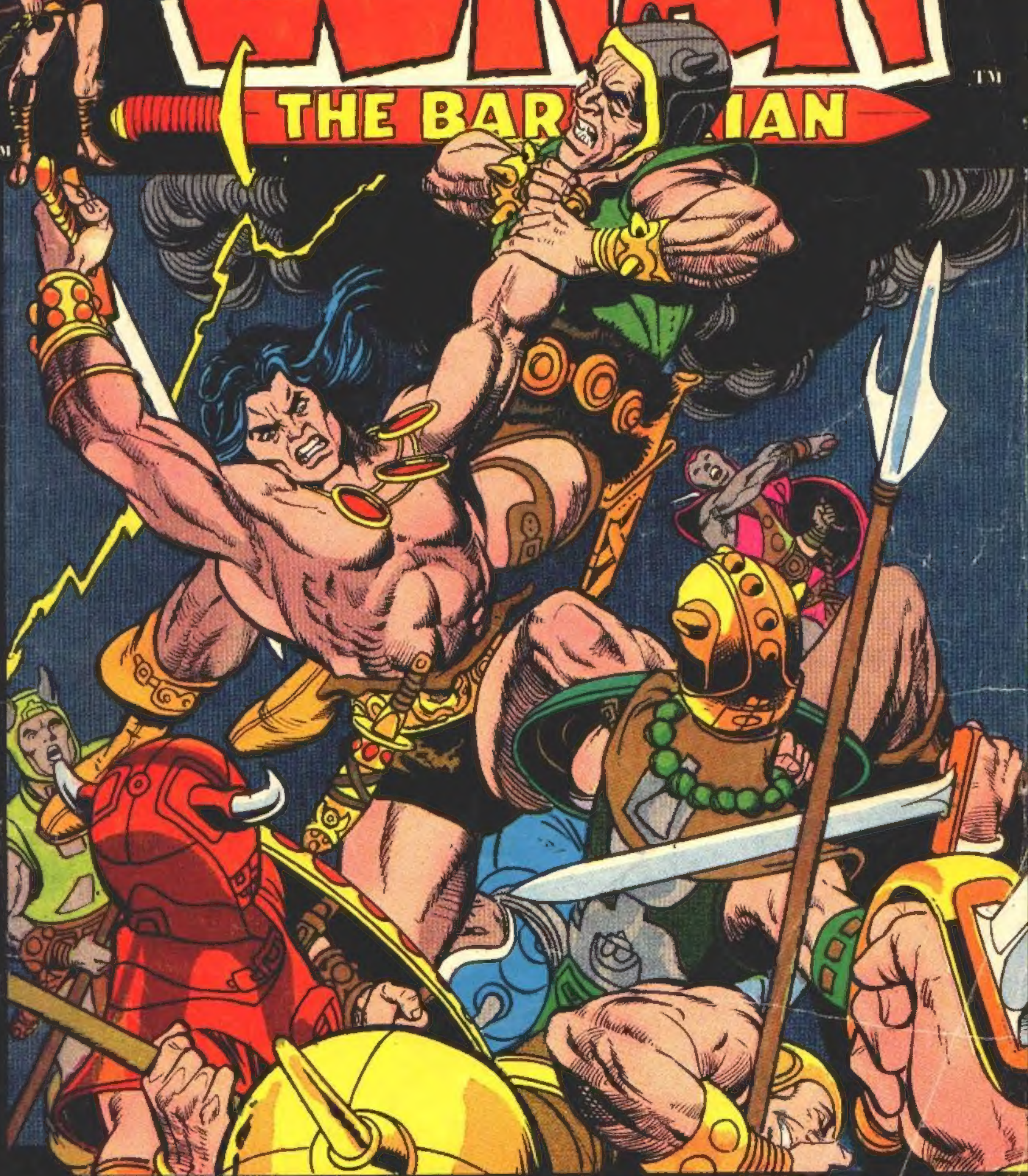
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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN

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AUTHORITY



THE MOST SAVAGE HERO OF ALL!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN!™

"KNOW, O PRINCE, THAT BETWEEN THE YEARS WHEN THE OCEANS DRANK ATLANTIS AND THE GLEAMING CITIES, AND THE YEARS OF THE RISE OF THE SONS OF ARYAS, THERE WAS AN AGE UNDREAMED-OF, WHEN SHINING KINGDOMS LAY SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD LIKE BLUE MANTLES BENEATH THE STARS...."

"HITHER CAME CONAN THE CIMMERIAN -- BLACK-HAIRED, SULLEN-EYED, SWORD IN HAND, A THIEF, A REAVER, A SLAYER, WITH GIGANTIC MELANCHOLIES AND GIGANTIC MIRTH-- TO TREAD THE JEWELLED THRONES OF EARTH UNDER HIS SANDALED FEET."

-- R.E.H.

"THE DWELLER IN THE DARK"

HO, DESERT-RAT! NONE MAY DRINK OF THE SPRINGS OF ZAHMAHN-- TILL HE HAS PAID TRIBUTE TO OUR QUEEN.

I THIRST, DOG-- AND WHEN I THIRST--

-- EITHER I DRINK DEEP-- OR ELSE MY BLADE DOES!

STAN ROY BARRY
LEE THOMAS SMITH
EDITOR WRITER ARTIST
SAM ROSEN, LETTERER

BASED ON THE HERO...
CREATED BY
ROBERT E. HOWARD



SEIZE HIM!
THE STRANGER
MUST PAY FOR
HIS INSOLENCE.

AYE, MY
CAPTAIN.



NOW SWORDS
CLASH IN
CORINTHIA--
HERE, IN THE
GAUNT SHADOW
OF ONE OF THE
NUMEROUS
CITY-STATES
JUST ACROSS
THE BORDER
FROM
ZAMORA---

--AS ONE
MAN FALLS,
HEAD HALF-
SEVERED
FROM
WRITHING
BODY---



-- AND THEN
ANOTHER--



STAY BACK,
YOU MEN!
THIS IS NO
ORDINARY
DESERT-RAT
WE'VE
FLUSHED.

I, YULEK,
SHALL PER-
SONALLY
CARVE HIS
CARCASS AS
A FEAST FOR
THE---



BUT, THE CORNERED BARBARIAN DOES
NOT WAIT FOR HIS TAUNTER TO FINISH--
RATHER, HE SPRINGS FORWARD LIKE SOME
SNARLING PANTHER---

--AND THE BRAGGADOCIO OF
FOOLHARDY YULEK DIES
A-BORNING IN HIS RED-
GUSHING THROAT.



MISBEGOTTEN
JACKAL-
SPAWN!

IS THIS HOW YOU
WELCOME WAY-
FARERS-- WITH
SCIMITARS AND
UNFAIR ODDS?

HAN! SO
YOU'VE FOUND
YOUR TONGUE
AGAIN, EH,
DESERT-
RAT?



WELL, YOU'LL THANK
YOUR HEATHEN GODS
--IF THE QUEEN LETS
YOU KEEP IT!



HE'S DOWN. I'M FOR SPLITTING HIM LIKE A MELON--AND LEAVING HIM FOR THE VULTURES.

WHILE WE GO TELL THE QUEEN THAT YULEK, HER FAVORITE PARAMOUR, WAS KILLED BY A PHANTOM?

USE YOUR HEAD, MAN.



WE'LL HAUL THE ROGUE IN, TO PROVE WE DIDN'T SLAY YULEK OURSELVES, OVER SOME GAMBLING DEBT OR OTHER.

WHY, SHE'LL PROBABLY HAVE HIM FLAYED ALIVE!



--THAT IS HE, MAJESTY.

THE ONE WHO SLEW YOUR BELOVED YULEK.

HE WAS MY LOVER, FOOL.

THAT IS NOT THE SAME AS BEING MY BELOVED!



STILL, FATIMA IS QUEEN--AND SO MUST ACT!

WELL, OUTLANDER? WHAT SAY YOU FOR YOURSELF, ERE I CONDEMN YOU TO THE FLAYER'S KNIFE?



I SAY-- LOOSE MY BONDS AND HAND ME A SWORD--

AND I'LL NOT WALK THE ROAD TO HELL ALONE.



YOU HAVE COURAGE, WANDERER-- SOMETHING THAT ZAHMAHN SEES LITTLE OF.

YAILA-- FILL THAT WINE-FLAGON FOR OUR-- GUEST.

YES, O QUEEN.



BY LAW OF GODS AND STATE, I SHOULD HAVE YOU KILLED-- BUT SHE WHO MAKES THE LAW MAY LIKEWISE BREAK IT.

BESIDES, I NEED A NEW CAPTAIN, NOW THAT MY OLD ONE IS DEAD.

WELL?

I MAKE NO BARGAINS-- WHILE MY HANDS ARE TIED.



DAYS PASS--WEEKS--
AND CONAN BECOMES A
FIXTURE IN THE SPRAWL-
ING PALACE---



-- AS MUCH A FIXTURE AS
THE SWORD-WIELDING
EUNUCH WHO KEEPS HIM
EVER IN SIGHT.



BUT FINALLY
ON A DAY WHEN
THE SEARING
DESERT SUN
BRINGS UNWANT-
ED SLEEP TO HIS
MUTE GUARDIAN--



-- THE MIGHTY-
MUSCLED
CIMMERIAN
RESOLVES TO
TEST THE
BOUNDARIES
OF HIS DARK
DOMINION---

-- AND FINDS
THEM *SLIGHT*
INDEED!

HALT, OUT-
LANDER. THIS
FAR-- AND NO
FARTHER!

WHAT?
YOU
DARE?



WE DARE
NOTHING
ELSE,
FOOL.

YOU SEE, THE QUEEN
HAS GIVEN ORDERS
TO *SLAY* YOU-- IF
YOU TRY TO LEAVE
THE PALACE.

THEN I'M TO
BE KEPT--
LIKE SOME
SLAVISH
LAP-DOG?

THE LIFE OF A
PALACE DOG IS
SWEET, BAR-
BARIAN. ENJOY
IT-- WHILE IT
LASTS.



BUT, WORDS OF SMIRKING
WISDOM WILL NOT *SOOTHE*
THE SAVAGE BREAST--
AND THUS---

FATIMA! I
WOULD SPEAK
WITH---

YOU--
YAILA!



CONAN!
Y-YOU
STARTLED
ME.

I SEE YOU DIDN'T
KNOW THAT, AS THE
QUEEN'S HANDMAID,
I AM PRIVILEGED TO
USE THE ROYAL BATH-
CHAMBER.



YOU STORMED
IN HERE SEEKING
FATIMA-- AND I
THINK I KNOW WHY.

YOU DO? THEN
HAVE YOUR SAY,
GIRL.

YOU THINK OF
YOURSELF AS
CAPTAIN OF
THE QUEEN'S
GUARD-- BUT
YOU ARE THAT
IN NAME
ONLY.

GO
ON.



GLADLY-- BUT
FIRST, PLEASE
HAND ME THAT
ROBE YONDER.

STONE WALLS
MAKE FOR CHILLING
DRAFTS.





THAT'S BETTER.

IF ONLY THE QUEEN DID NOT POSSESS YOUR HEART--

OH, CONAN-- HOW I'VE LONGED FOR YOU, SINCE THE MOMENT I FIRST SAW YOU.

I'VE NO LOVE FOR THAT COLD FISH, GIRL.

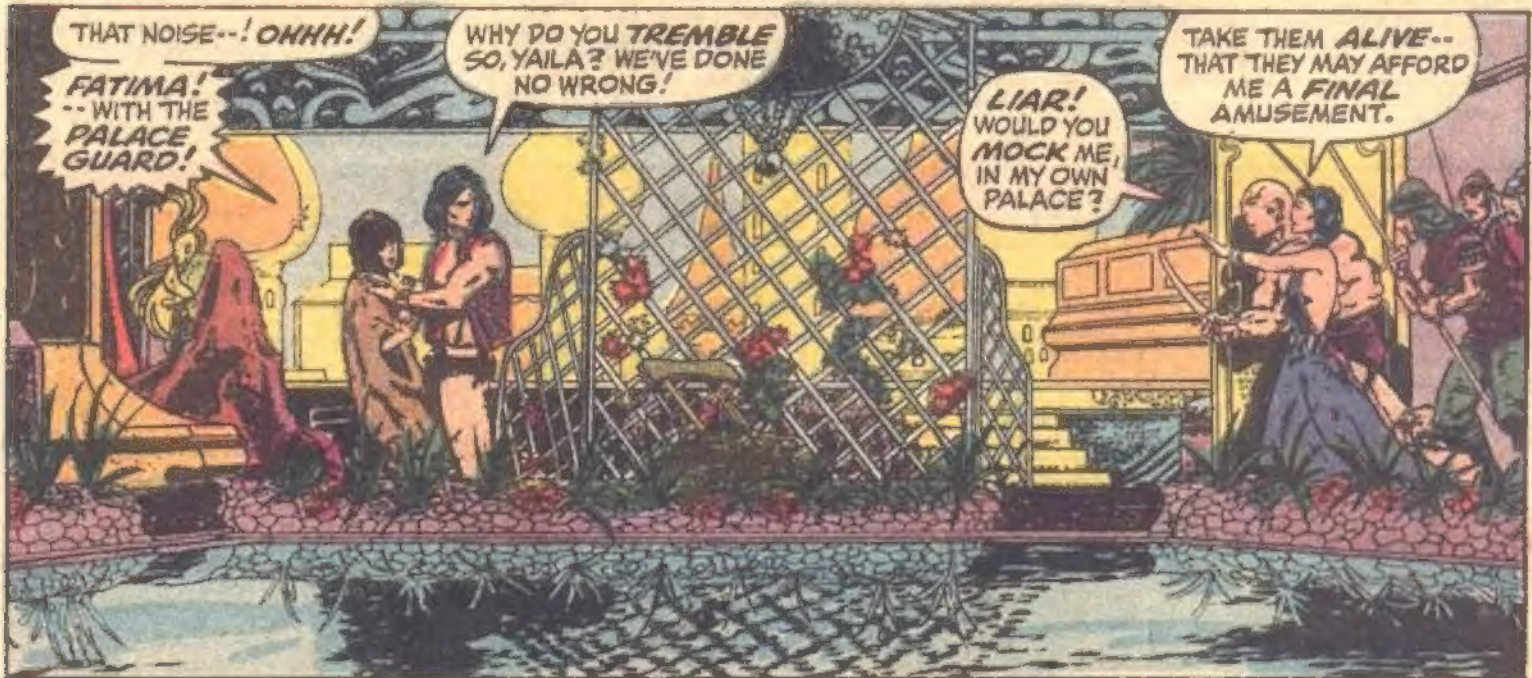
IT'S LIFE I LOVE-- AND I DO WHAT I CAN TO KEEP IT.



THEN FLEE, CONAN-- AND KEEP IT LONGER.

FOR, WHEN YOUR YOUTH FADES--OR YOUR BAR-BARIAN'S SCOWL BEGINS TO BORE HER--

--SHE'LL HAVE YOU KILLED, AS SHE DID SO MANY OTHERS. SHE--



THAT NOISE--! OHHH!

FATIMA! -- WITH THE PALACE GUARD!

WHY DO YOU TREMBLE SO, YAILA? WE'VE DONE NO WRONG!

LIAR! WOULD YOU MOCK ME, IN MY OWN PALACE?

TAKE THEM ALIVE-- THAT THEY MAY AFFORD ME A FINAL AMUSEMENT.



FOR, WHEN YOU TOUCHED ANOTHER, CIMMERIAN--- WHEN YOUR EYES MET, AND HER FINGERTIPS BRUSHED YOUR CHEEK--

YOU SIGNED YOUR DEATH-WARRANT, IN LEAGUE-HIGH LETTERS OF BLOOD.



WELL? HAVE YOU NAUGHT TO SAY FOR YOURSELF, SAVAGE?

YOU CALL ME A SAVAGE-- EVEN AS YOU CONDEMN ME FOR NOTHING?

BETTER A SWIFT DEATH -- THAN THE FIERCE EMBRACE OF A MAD-WOMAN.

CONAN, I-- I'M SO SORRY--!

FORGET IT. I WAS TIRED OF THE OLD HAG ANYWAY.

AT SPEARPOINT, CONAN AND THE SLAVE-GIRL ARE LED DOWN TORTUOUS, STONE-COLD STAIRS-- TO A **DUNGEON** BENEATH THE VERY PALACE---

WHAT'S YOUR PLEASURE, FATIMA?

STARVATION? OR ARE WE TO FURNISH FOOD FOR YOUR LEGIONS, THE RATS?

FOOD--- YES---

-- BUT SCARCELY FOR MERE RATS.

OH, CONAN-- MY STRONG, AMOROUS CONAN---

IF ONLY YOU'D BEEN ABLE TO COOL YOUR HOT YOUNG BLOOD-- AND GIVE ME THE TOTAL WORSHIP I MUST HAVE---

SAVE YOUR WORDS, QUEEN-- FOR YOUR NEXT HOUSE-PET.

MILADY-- SHALL I---?

STAY YOUR HAND, GUARD.

LEAVE ALL THEIR SCREAMS-- FOR THE DWELLER IN THE DARK.

WE'D BEST GO, MAJESTY-- BEFORE WE OURSELVES HOLD THAT UNWELCOME MEETING.

I HEAR HIM NOW-- FAR OFF, BUT DRAWING NEARER.

THEY ARE GONE. BUT-- THE DWELLER IS COMING.

PRAY TO MITRA, CONAN-- THAT HE'LL RECEIVE YOUR SOUL THIS DAY.

MY GOD IS CROM-- AND HE DOESN'T NEED MEN'S PRAYERS TO KEEP HIS SWORD-ARM STRONG.

BUT-- I DO HEAR SOMETHING, SLUSHING ABOUT.

THIS DWELLER --WHAT IS HE?

NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN HIM AND LIVED TO--

CONAN-- WHAT--?

I'M TESTING MY CHAINS, GIRL. THEY'RE NEW--

-- BUT THE LINKS WHICH HOLD THEM TO THE WALL-- ARE OLD.

WELL, WHATEVER I'M GOING TO DO-- I'D BEST DO IT QUICKLY.

THEN-- WHAT GOOD IF YOU DO BREAK FREE? WE'RE STILL DOOMED!

THAT SPLASHING FROM BEYOND-- GROWS CLOSER BY THE SECOND.

I'M-- DOOMED--
WHEN I LIE DOWN
AND DIE, WENCH--

-- AND NOT--
BEFORE!

HUNNGHH!

YOU SEE, MY BARBARIAN? YOU
PULLED AS HARD AS YOU COULD
-- BUT THE CHAINS DIDN'T BREAK.

SHADIZAR
WASN'T
CORRUPTED
IN A DAY,
GIRL.

NOW STAND
AWAY--
AND KEEP
QUIET.

AND NOW, GREAT MUSCLES MADLY DANCE-- A BESTIAL
GROWL ESCAPES A CORDED THROAT-- AS A POWERFUL
YOUNG BACK ARCHES--!

CONAN-- YOUR
WRISTS--

I-- SAID--
KEEP
QUIET!

YET, METAL DOES BITE INTO EVEN THE
STRONGEST OF WRISTS-- AND WATERS
CHURN, LIKE BEASTS GOADED INTO A
FRENZY BY THE TASTE OF BLOOD--

THE GIRL GASPS--- AS, WITH A GROAN OF
EFFORT, THE BLACK-MANED SAVAGE BRACES
MIGHTY-THEWED LEGS AGAINST THE DANK
STONE WALL---

-- AND THEN
IS FREE---

-- WRENCHES
VIOLENTLY
OUTWARD,
WITH ONE LAST,
CYCLOPEAN
SURGE---



YOU DID IT, CONAN. YOU DID IT!

BUT, YOUR WRISTS-- ARE THEY--?



OHKHHH--!



NEVER MIND-- ABOUT THAT NOW.

COME ON. WE'RE GETTING OUT OF THIS HELLISH PLACE.

NOT THAT WAY! THAT'S WHERE THE SPLASHING SOUNDS CAME FROM.



IT'S THE ONLY WAY.

FATIMA'S SWORDSMEN WOULD HACK US TO BITS IF WE WENT ANY OTHER!

BESIDES, I'D RATHER DIE FACING MY SLAYER, THAN WITH MY BACK TO HIM-- WHILE I HAMMERED IN VAIN AGAINST A STEEL DOOR.

JUST THE SAME, I WISH TO CROM I HAD---



-- A SWORD--!?

HAH! MAYBE THERE IS SOMETHING TO THIS PRAYING NONSENSE, AFTER ALL!

CONAN-- THE SOUNDS -- GETTING CLOSER--

QUIET, WOMAN-- DON'T YOU THINK I CAN HEAR?



BUT, THIS FELLOW'S BEEN HOLDING THIS SWORD FOR ME--- MAYBE FOR YEARS.

IT COULD BE AN OMEN THAT---

CONAN.. LOOK!



THE DWELLER IN THE DARK!

ONCE, IT WAS A MAN-- A MAN LIKE ANY OTHER. A MAN WHO LIVED, LAUGHED LOVED, FATHERED CHILDREN. BUT THEN PUNISHED BY THE CRUEL-MOUTHED GODS FOR SOME IMAGINED SLIGHT, HIS VERY HUMANITY FADED--- SHED LIKE A SNAKE'S SLOUGHED SKIN---

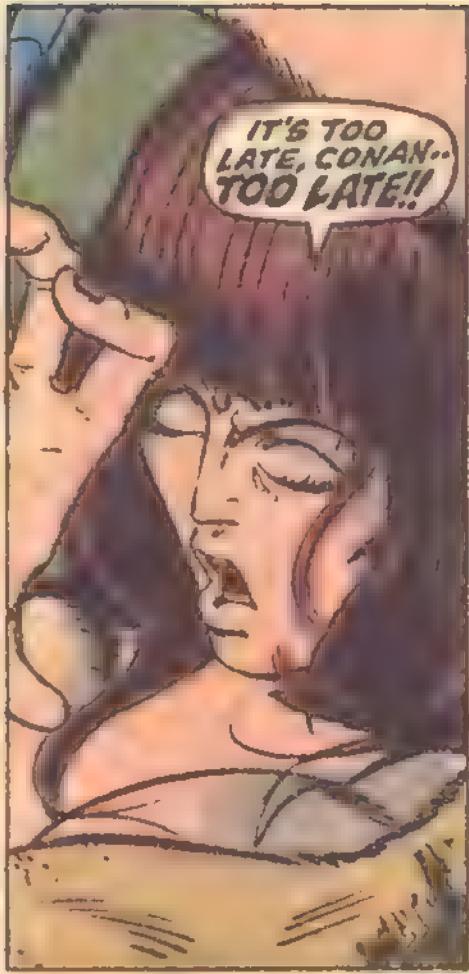
AND HE BECAME WHAT
NOW HE IS--AN ETERNALLY
WRITHING, OBSCENELY
GURGling MONSTROSITY!

CROM'S
DEVILS!





HOLD ON, GIRL!
I'M COMING!



IT'S TOO LATE, CONAN..
TOO LATE!!



DEVIL TAKE 'EM--
WOMEN ARE NO
BLASTED GOOD!

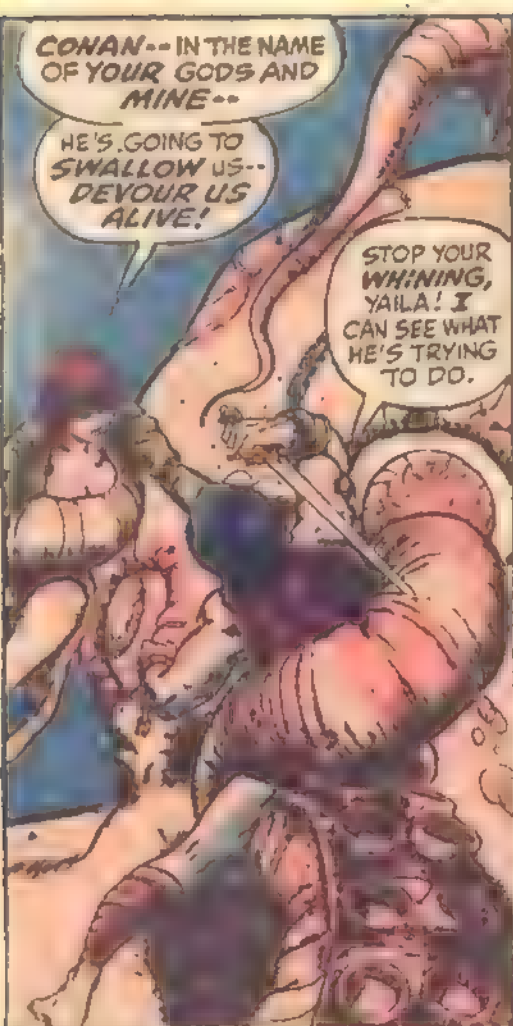


THEY TEASE
YOU-- CARESS
YOU-- PROMISE
YOU THE MOON
ON A SILVER
PLATTER---

BUT, WHEN
THE FIGHTING
STARTS, THEY
WHIMPER IN THE
NEAREST DARK
CORNER---



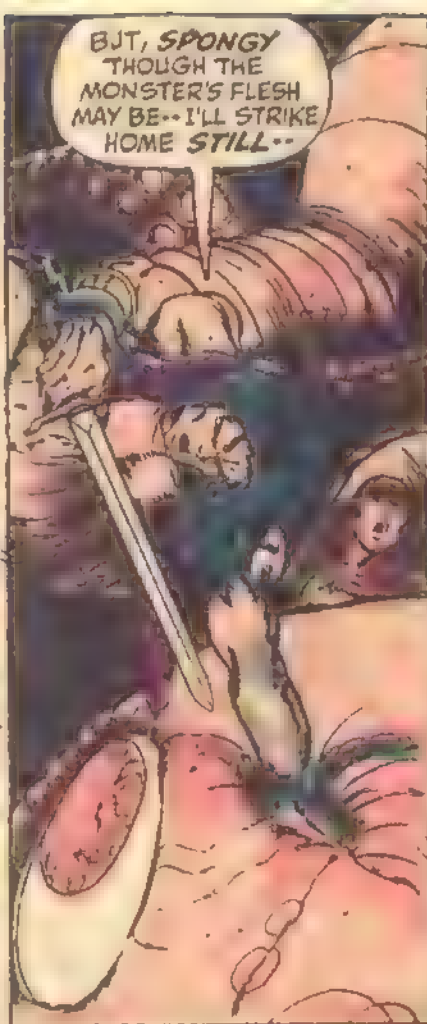
-- AND LEAVE YOU
TO HACK YOUR WAY
OUT-- OR DIE!



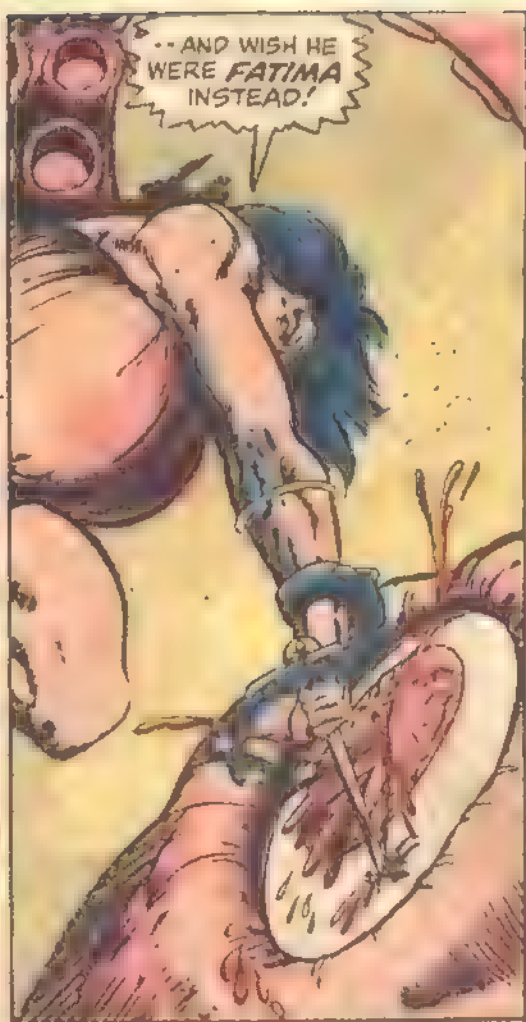
CONAN--IN THE NAME
OF YOUR GODS AND
MINE--

HE'S GOING TO
SWALLOW US--
DEVOUR US
ALIVE!

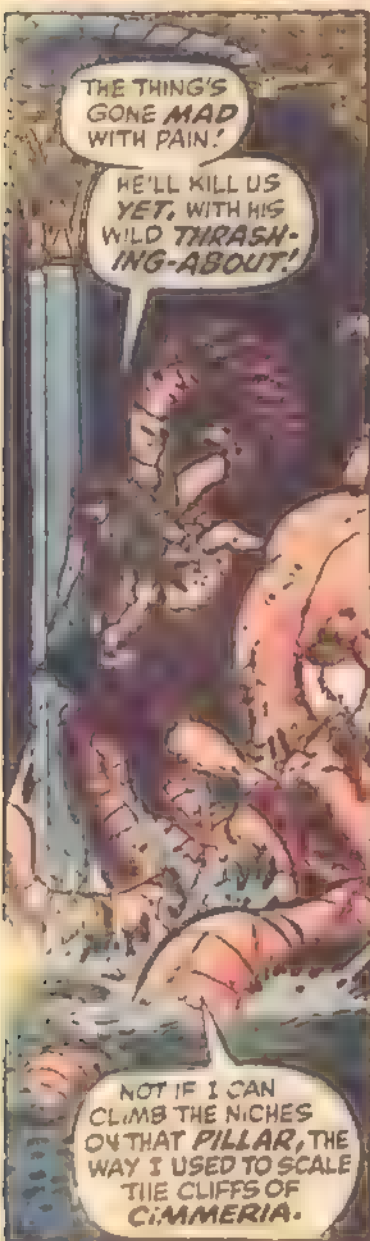
STOP YOUR
WHINING,
YAILA! I
CAN SEE WHAT
HE'S TRYING
TO DO.



BUT, SPONGY
THOUGH THE
MONSTER'S FLESH
MAY BE--I'LL STRIKE
HOME STILL--



--AND WISH HE
WERE *FATIMA*
INSTEAD!



THE THING'S
GONE MAD
WITH PAIN!

HE'LL KILL US
YET, WITH HIS
WILD THRASH-
ING-ABOUT!

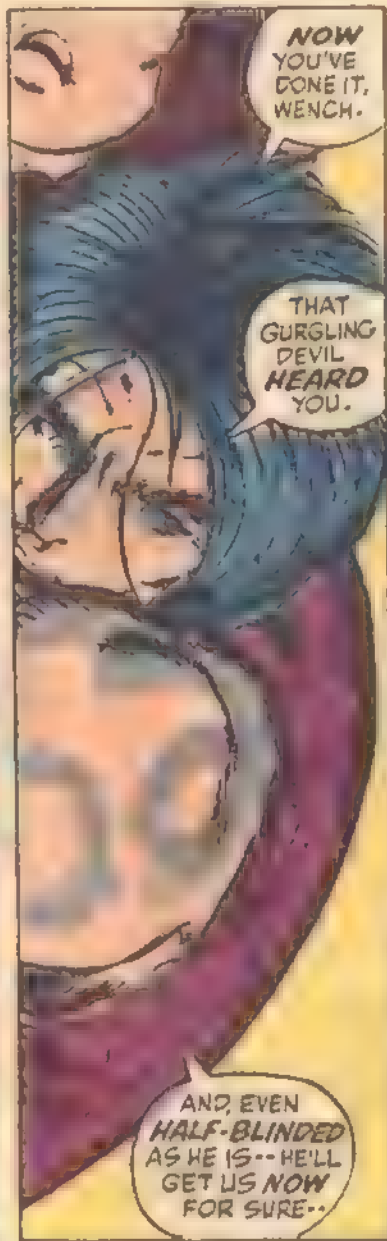
NOT IF I CAN
CLIMB THE NICHES
ON THAT PILLAR,
THE WAY I USED TO SCALE
THE CLIFFS OF
CIMMERIA.



AH-- QUIET
NOW, GIRL---

CONAN
-- THAT
ARM--

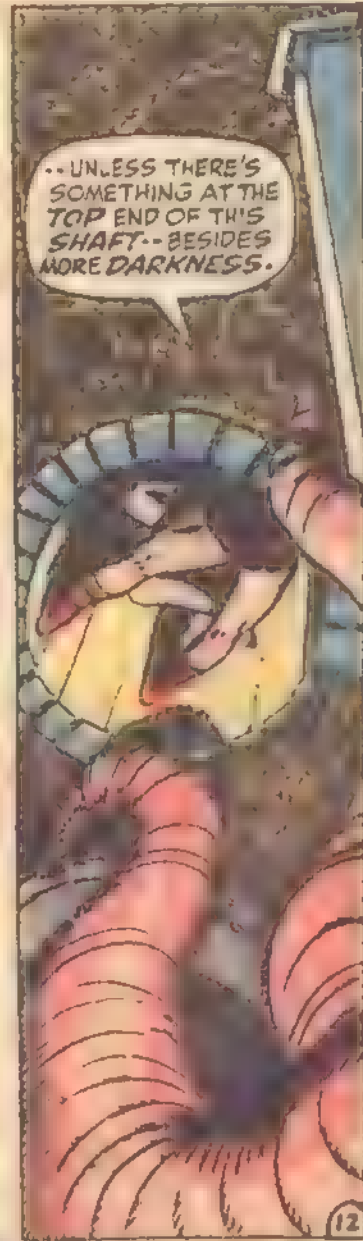
IT'S SO
HUGE--SO
CLOSE--!



NOW
YOU'VE
DONE IT,
WENCH.

THAT
GURGLING
DEVIL
HEARD
YOU.

AND, EVEN
HALF-BLIND
AS HE IS-- HE'LL
GET US NOW
FOR SURE--



--UNLESS THERE'S
SOMETHING AT THE
TOP END OF TH'S
SHAFT-- BESIDES
MORE DARKNESS.

SOMETHING
B-BRUSHED MY
FOOT, CONAN--
THE DWELLER--



KEEP
STILL.

I-- CAN MAKE
WAY UPWARD--
BRACING MY BACK
AGAINST THE STONE
SIDES OF THE
SHAFT--

BUT, SQUIRM
ONCE MORE--
AND I SWEAR
I'LL DROP YOU.



OOHHHH!

GODS! THE
STONES ARE
SLASHING MY BACK
TO RIBBONS.

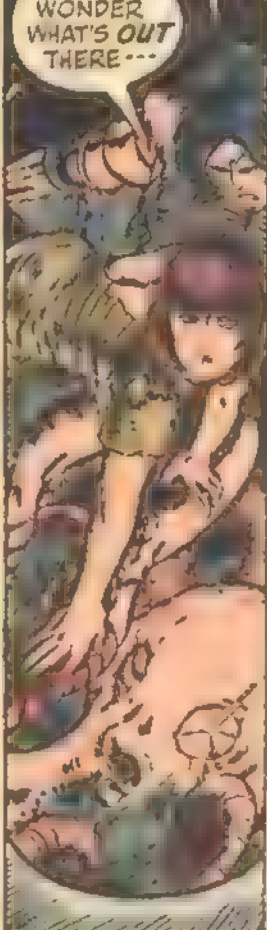
BUT--THERE'S
SOMETHING JUST
ABOVE ME-- A
TRAPDOOR.

HOLD ON, GIRL.
HOLD ON.

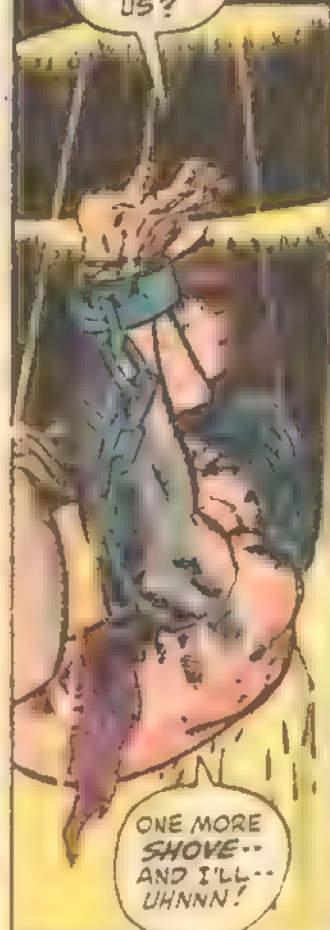


THERE! NOW--
IF I CAN JUST
PUSH IT OPEN--

I-- I
WONDER
WHAT'S OUT
THERE---

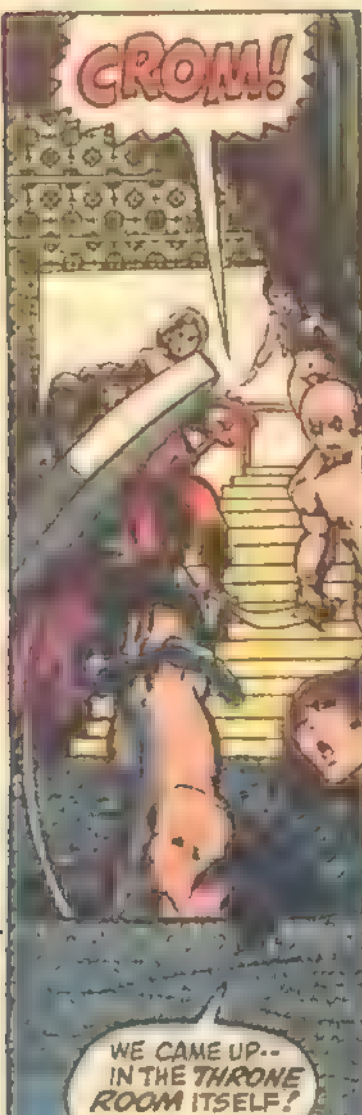


DOES IT
MATTER?
CAN IT BE
WORSE--
THAN WHAT'S
BEHIND
US?



ONE MORE
SHOVE--
AND I'LL--
UHHNN!

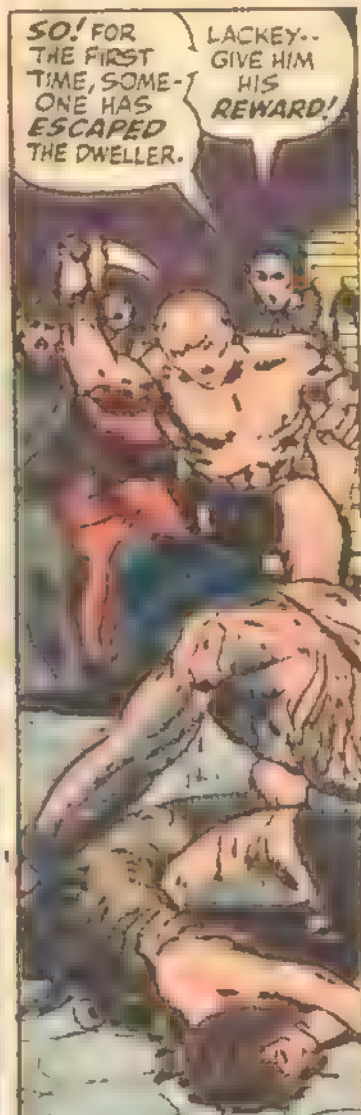
CROM!



WE CAME UP--
IN THE THRONE
ROOM ITSELF!

SO! FOR
THE FIRST
TIME, SOME-
ONE HAS
ESCAPED
THE DWELLER.

LACKEY--
GIVE HIM
HIS
REWARD!



DULL-WITTED WITCH!
DO YOU THINK I FOUGHT
OFF A MONSTER'S
EMBRACE---



-- TO DIE
BENEATH A
EUNUCH'S
SWORD?





WELL? ANY MORE OF YOU DOGS EAGER TO RUSH ME-- NOW THAT I'VE GOT A SWORD?

COME ON! WHO WANTS TO BE THE FIRST TO DIE FOR HIS QUEEN?



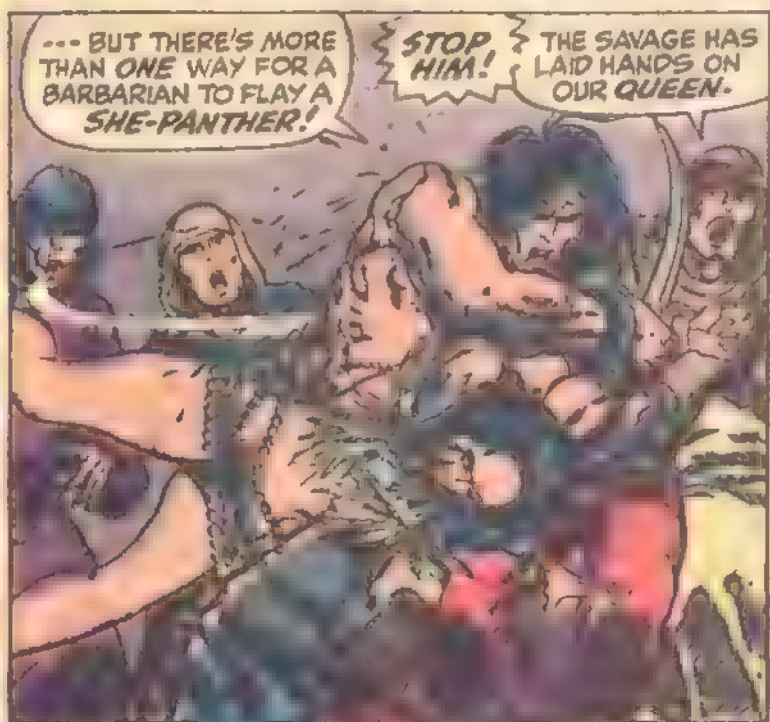
LET ME PASS, FOOLS. OUT OF MY WAY!

IN THESE PAST NIGHTS, BARBARIAN, I'VE LEARNED MORE ABOUT YOU THAN YOU IMAGINE.

I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU WOULD EVER STAB A WOMAN-- NO MATTER WHAT THE REASON.



MAYBE-- NOT STAB--



--- BUT THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY FOR A BARBARIAN TO PLAY A SHE-PANTHER!

STOP HIM!

THE SAVAGE HAS LAID HANDS ON OUR QUEEN.



STAND BACK, DOGS -- OR SHE GOES INTO THE PIT AT ONCE.

LOOK DOWN, WOMAN-- TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE IN THE SHADOWS BELOW.

THE-- DWELLER! OH, MITRA-- THE DWELLER!



I'LL PROMISE YOU ANY-THING--!

CONAN-- IN THE NAME OF ISHTAR-- DON'T LET ME FALL!

YOU CAN REIGN AT MY SIDE-- OR MAKE ME YOUR SLAVE--

AYE--YOU'D PROMISE
ME ANYTHING--THEN
BETRAY ME.

I SAID I WAS A
BARBARIAN. I
DIDN'T SAY---
THAT I WAS
STUPID.

NO!

NNOOOOO

THE SCREAMS WENT ON FOR A LONG TIME-- OR WAS
IT MERELY---
ECHOES---?

ALL RIGHT, PIGS--
SO I KILLED YOUR
PRECIOUS QUEEN.

YOU'VE ALL GOT WEAPONS.
NOW, DO I FIGHT YOU ONE
AT A TIME-- OR ALL
TOGETHER?

IT MAKES--NO
DIFFERENCE
TO ME.

WELL?

ALL HAIL
CONAN THE
CIMMERIAN!

ALL HAIL
OUR
DELIVERER!

THEN-- THERE'LL BE NO
FIGHT? BUT-- I SLEW--
YOUR SOVEREIGN.

RULERS ARE
EASY TO
COME BY.

ONE DIES--
WE'RE FREE
TO CHOOSE
A NEW ONE.

YOU PEOPLE-- HAVE MORE SENSE-- THAN I GAVE YOU CREDIT FOR.

BUT-- I'M THE ONE-- WHO DID AWAY WITH HER.

A DREAM ONCE TOLD ME I'D BE A KING SOME DAY-- WHY NOT HERE?

UH-- NOTHING WOULD PLEASE US MORE, SIRE--- BUT THE MASSES WOULD RISE IN REVOLT.

ZAHMAHN HAS ONLY QUEENS--- NEVER A KING.

STILL, IF YOU WOULD DEIGN TO CHOOSE US A QUEEN--!?

YES-- I WOULD---

AND I CHOOSE-- YAILA!

ME, CONAN? BUT I WAS BORN A SLAVE.

I-- I KNOW NOT WHAT TO SAY!

THEN-- SAY NOTHING.

I'M-- TOO OUT OF BREATH-- WITH TOO MANY SCARS-- TO FEEL LIKE ANSWERING, ANYWAY.

YAILA--- RISE, MY CHILD---

IT IS NOT FITTING THAT A QUEEN SHOULD KNEEL IN THE PRESENCE OF HER LOYAL SERVITORS.

A--- QUEEN--

ALL HAIL! ALL HAIL! QUEEN YAILA!

CONAN-- MY HEROIC ONE-- STAY IN ZAHMAHN.

YOU SHALL HAVE HONOR ABOVE ALL OTHERS--- AS MY CONSORT.

NO, GIRL. I'VE WOUNDS TO LICK-- AND A THRONE OF MY OWN TO FIND.

BESIDES--- I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF QUEENS THIS PAST FORTNIGHT--

-- AND I TRULY DON'T KNOW--

-- IF I COULD SURVIVE ANOTHER--!

Finis

TALES OF THE HYBORIAN AGE!

"THE BLOOD OF THE DRAGON!"

"BUT THE PROUDEST KINGDOM OF THE WORLD WAS AQUILONIA, REIGNING SUPREME IN THE DREAMING WEST..."

--ROBERT E. HOWARD.

Y'KNOW, GIL, THOSE CONAN STORIES ARE A **BLAST** TO DO--BUT THERE MUST'VE BEEN A LOT **MORE** GOING ON, BACK DURING HOWARD'S MYTHICAL **HYBORIAN AGE** OF 12,000 YEARS AGO.

SOME-
BODY'S
GOING
TO, ROY.
US; NO
LESS.

IT'S A SHAME
SOMEBODY
DOESN'T WRITE
AND DRAW
ONE OF **THOSE**
ADVENTURES.

IMAGINE
YOURSELF A
BECLOUDED
DAY IN
AQUILONIA--
THE PROVINCE
OF **POITAIN**--
THE CLASH
AND CLANGOR
OF A **KNIGHTS'**
TOURNEY--

AND THEN, **ABOVE**
THE TUMULT--A
STRIDENT **SHOUT**--!

VALANNUS
IS
DOWN!

THE DAY
BELONGS
TO ME--
TO
KALLIGOR!



STAN LEE * ROY THOMAS * GIL KANE * DIVERSE HANDS * ARTIE SIMEK
EDITOR WRITER ARTIST EMBELLISHMENT LETTERER

IT IS A TIME FOR CHIVALRY--
LONG MILLENNIA BEFORE THERE
WILL BE SUCH AN OLD-FRENCH
WORD--OR A FRANCE, FOR THAT
MATTER--!

NO, VALANNUS.

DO YOU
YIELD--
OR SHALL
WE HAVE
AT IT
ONCE
MORE?

NO NEED,
MY FRIEND.
I DO
YIELD!

AND, MOST NOBLE
AMONG THE NOBLE,
IN THE EYES OF THE
KNIGHTS OF POITAIN,
IS ONE CALLED
KALLIGOR...

THEN RISE, MAN.
I'LL COLLECT MY
LAURELS ON THE
MORROW.

NOW, I'M
OFF FOR
THE CASTLE--
AND DINNER
WITH THE
BARON
HIMSELF.

BUT, NO MAN IS HERO,
THEY SAY, TO HIS VALET--

--NOR THIS
KALLIGOR,
TO HIS
SQUIRE--!

VARLET!

WHY NO
FRESH
LINEN--
NO CLEAN
VEST-
MENTS
READY
FOR MY
RETURN?

A THOUSAND PARDONS,
MILORD, AND DAMN ME
FOR A NEMEDIAN--BUT
I BECAME SO IMMERSSED
IN THE TOURNEY--!

THEY'LL BE
LAID OUT FOR
YOU IN A
MOMENT--
I SWEAR IT.

THEN MAKE
HASTE TO
KEEP YOUR
VOWS, KNAVE
--AND YOUR
EARS, AS WELL.

HAH! NO ONE
WOULD DARE
ACCUSE ME OF
LOOSING THAT
FOOL VALANNUS'
CINCH-STRAPS.

BUT NOW, I MUST
MAKE A PLEASANT
SIGHT THIS EVE,
FOR MY LORD THE
BARON.

FOR, HIS
DAUGHTER'S OF A
MARRIAGEABLE
AGE--AND HIS SON,
A BRAVE DOLT WHO'LL
NEVER LAST OUT
THIRTY SUMMERS!

THERE WILL BE NAMES
FOR SUCH AS KALLIGOR,
IN ERAS TO COME--
AND NOT ALL OF THEM
PRETTY ONES--

BUT, THIS NIGHT,
THE CASTLE
TONGUES WILL
SPEAK OF MORE
FEARFUL
THINGS--!

EH? WHO
LET THAT
COMMONER
IN HERE?

MY LORD **BARON**--
I BRING YOU NEWS
FROM THE
BOSSONIAN
MARCHES.

THE **HYDRAGON** HAS
APPEARED ONCE MORE--
AND **SLAIN** NEARLY AN
ENTIRE VILLAGE!

GRIM NEWS,
INDEED--
BUT WHAT
HAS THAT
DREAD
BEAST TO
DO WITH
US?

WHAT?

THE
FRONTIER
IS FAR
AWAY.

TRUE--BUT 'TIS
PART OF THE
DUTY I OWE
KING NUMEDIDES
THAT I SEE TO
THE **DEFENSE** OF
AQUILONIA'S
FRONTIER.

AND ONE WENT FORTH,
FROM OUT THE VILLAGE.

BUT--THOSE
WHO **SURVIVE**
SAY THEY
NE'ER SAW
HIM AGAIN.

STILL, **LEGEND**
HAS IT THAT THE
HYDRAGON MAY
BE KILLED ONLY
BY A **SINGLE**
WARRIOR, FIGHT-
ING ALONE.

BY
MITRA,
I'LL
SLAY
THAT
DEVIL.

NAY, SIRE--
SEND ME!
SEND ME!

I'LL BOOT
THAT WORM
BACK TO HELL
WITH HIS **TAIL**
BETWEEN HIS
FANGS.

WHAT OF YOU,
KALLIGOR? YOU EXCEL IN
THE **GAMES**--
AND IN THE
COMPANY OF
THE **LADIES.**

DOESN'T THE THOUGHT OF
BATTLING THE **HYDRAGON**
FIRE YOUR BLOOD?

AYE,
SIRE...

...BUT I PRE-
FER TO **SAVE**
MY SWORD,
FOR BATTLES
CLOSER TO
HOME.

THEN--
I
SHALL
GO!

YOU? MY OWN--
MY ONLY SON!?

I'LL NOT HEAR
OF IT. YOU'RE
YOUNG--

I'M A **KNIGHT**
OF YOUR COURT--
AND YOU PROMISED
ME LAST NIGHT
ANY **BOON** I
MIGHT CRAVE.

THIS
QUEST
IS THAT
BOON, FATHER.

THEN--I
MUST
SEND YOU
ON IT--
BUT WITH
A **HEAVY**
HEART.

ALL HAIL THE
BARON'S
SON! HE'LL
SLAY THAT
MONSTER!

BUT BEWARE
HIS **BLOOD**,
LAD! THEY
SAY 'TIS
CURSED!

HAH! LET THESE
FOOLS ROUSE
HEAVEN WITH
THEIR **HOARSE**
BRAVADO.

MAYHAP I'LL FIGHT
THAT FABLED DRAGON
YET--BUT IN MY
OWN TIME, AND IN
MY OWN WAY!

AND THAT TIME COMES, 'TWOULD SEEM, FAR SOONER THAN EVEN KALLIGOR WOULD HAVE GUESSED--

YOU RIDE LIKE THE VERY WIND, MAN.

WHAT NEWS HAVE YOU FROM THE MARCHES?

SIRE, 'TIS AS YOU--FEARED.

THE BARON'S SON HAS VANISHED THERE--DEVoured, NO DOUBT, BY THE HYDRAGON.

THIS, THEN, IS THE MOMENT I HAVE WAITED FOR--THE MOMENT FOR WHICH I MADE SACRIFICE TO UNHOLY ASURA.

IF I MOVE QUICKLY, AND SURELY--MY FORTUNE IS MADE.

NO! WHO TROUBLES ME, IN MINE HOUR OF GRIEF?

THEN--YOU HAVE HEARD THE DIRE TIDINGS, MY LORD!?

BUT, I HAVE COME TO CHEER YOUR HEART THIS DAY.

WHAT? HOW IN ISHTAR'S NAME CAN YOU--

I SHALL DO NOW, SIRE, WHAT I WISH I HAD DONE BEFORE.

I WILL RIDE AGAINST THE MONSTER--TODAY!

YOU WOULD DO THAT--KNOWING MY SON WAS AS FINE A SWORDSMAN AS YOUR-SELF?

BY MITRA, SLAY THE BEAST, AND MY DAUGHTER'S HAND IS YOURS--

--AS WELL AS HALF MY BARONY WHILE I LIVE, AND ALL OF IT WHEN I DIE!

WHAT-EVER YOU DESIRE, DEAR BARON.

FOR MYSELF, I WISH ONLY--REVENGE FOR A FALLEN FRIEND.

THUS, SCANT DAYS
AFTERWARD, A
LONE HORSEMAN
GALLOPS BENEATH
THE BRIDGE OF
THE ACCURSED,
WHICH MARKS THE
WESTERNMOST
BORDER OF
AQUILONIA--

--UNTIL,
ERE
LONG--

BY THE SCEPTRE
OF ISHTAR!

THERE, AHEAD
OF ME--
THUNDERING
OUT OF THE
SWIRLING
MISTS--

RRRRRRRRRR


THE
HYDRAGON!

--AND IF ONE
LISTENED
WITH PRICKED
EARS, ONE
MIGHT ALMOST
IMAGINE THAT
HE HEARS--
HALF-STIFLED
LAUGHTER.

IN TRUTH,
YOU ARE A
FORMID-
ABLE
DEMON--
A SLAYER
OF MANY
MEN!

BUT, THEY
FOUGHT YOU
WITH NAKED
SPEAR AND
LANCE--WITH
SABRE
AND WITH
SCIMITAR.

THEY NEVER DREAMED TO
USE, AS I DO NOW--



THE MONSTER'S
FALLEN--
BUT STILL HE
LIVES!

**FLEE,
STEED!**
I MUSTN'T
BE CRUSHED
NOW,
A
GNAT'S-TOOTH
DISTANCE
FROM MY
**LIFE'S
DESIRE.**

BUT **NO--**I
SEE HE
MERELY
BREATHES
AND
WRITHES
HIS **LAST.**

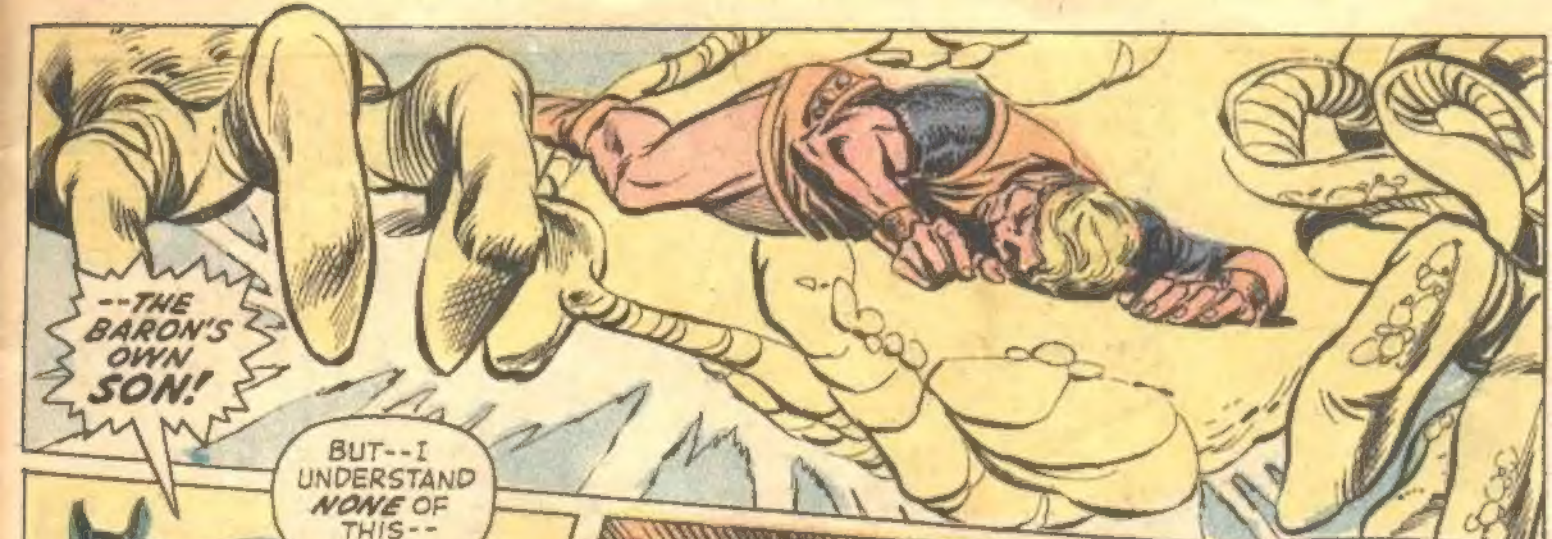
THEN,
THE
BARONY
IS MINE--
MINE!

HOLD!
SOMETHING
IS HAPPEN-
ING BELOW--
THE FETID
CORPSE
BEGINS TO
SHRINK--!

'TIS
**CHANGING
FORM NOW--**
BEFORE MY
VERY EYES!

**CHANGING--
TO--**

--A HARD-
HURLED
BLADE--
DIPPED IN
**DEADLY
POISON!**



--THE
BARON'S
OWN
SON!

BUT--I
UNDERSTAND
NONE OF
THIS--

--EXCEPT
TO
KNOW--
THAT
I AM
UNDONE.

BUT, EVEN
THE SWEET
SILENCE OF
DEATH
IS TO BE
DENIED
KALLIGOR,
AS,
SUDDENLY--

OH NO--
NNOOO!

THE BLOOD WHICH
TOUCHED MY BROW--
CHANGING ME--
INTO A

DRAGON

A REAL
GORY STORY,
GIL-- RIGHT
OUT OF THE OLD
WEIRD TALES!

HEY, I WONDER
IF CONAN EVER
MET THE
HYDRAGON--WHEN
HE WANDERED
TO THE BOSSONIAN
MARCHES!?

CAN'T SAY,
MY BOY.
BUT I CAN
TELL YOU
THIS--

IF I EVER
STUMBLE
ACROSS A
BLEEDING
DRAGON--
I PLAN TO
PHONE THE
RED
CROSS!

-FINIS-

I CAN BRING
THE BARON
NO PROOF
I'VE KILLED
THE MONSTER
WHOSE BLOOD
NOW BATHES
MY ARMOR--

--WITHOUT
REVEALING
THAT I SLEW
HIS ONLY
HEIR.

AND, IF I
DO THAT--
THEN I AM
A DEAD
MAN!

AND NOW,
AT LONG
LAST, HE
KNOWS THE
TRUTH
ABOUT THE
BLOOD OF THE
HYDRAGON--

--KNOWS THAT
EACH LONE
WARRIOR
BEFORE HIM
ALSO SLEW
THE BEAST,
AND PAID
FOR HIS
PRESUMPTION

--BY
BECOMING
THE
HYDRAGON
IN
TURN--!